

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

## **Remarks With President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil on the Partnership for Workers' Rights**

*September 20, 2023*

*President Biden.* Thank you. Please, have a seat. Thank you very much. Thank you all for being here.

*[At this point, reporters could be heard speaking in the background.]*

When the press stops doing verbal interviews, we'll get going.

Growing up in my household, my dad used to have an expression, for real. He'd say: "A job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your child in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay,' and mean it."

That idea is at the heart of my economic vision to rebuild our economy from the middle out, the bottom up, not the top down. Because when that happens, the middle class does fine and the—unions built the class in America. But secondly, the poor have a shot up and the wealthy still do very well, except they don't pay enough taxes, but that's a different issue. *[Laughter]*

And that vision is powered by a strong labor movement. That's why, in America, I'm proud that my administration is characterized as the most pro-union administration in American history. *[Applause]* No, I really mean it.

And let me be clear: Whether it's your auto workers or any other union worker, record corporation profits should mean record contracts for union workers.

Today I am proud to stand next to a group of leaders who feel the exact same way as we launch our new Partnership for Workers' Rights.

Over the last few days, the nations of the world have talked about climate change, sustainable development, food security, economic resilience. But we know our progress on these challenges depends on our workers.

They will drive our clean energy transition. They will keep the global supply chains secure. They'll build the infrastructure we need to keep our economies strong. So we have to empower them as well. And that's what this new partnership is all about. The partnership actually was this man's idea. *[Laughter]* Overall, we have five key goals.

First, protect workers' rights. That means ending forced labor, ending child labor, ending worker exploitation, which far—is far too common around the world. A step toward this goal—we'll work with leaders around the world to make sure that—the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, who is here with us today—to ensure that workers not only know their rights, but also have the tools to exercise their rights.

The second goal is to promote a safe and decent work that includes ensuring countries and companies are held accountable for the impacts on their—of their investments on workers' health, workers' wages, and workers' rights.

And the third element of this is, we will advance a worker-centric clean—a worker-centered clean energy transition. Folks, as I've told labor from the very beginning: When I think of climate change, I think of jobs. Jobs.

That's why, as we ramp up our production technologies like solar and smart grids and doubling down on our efforts to ensure the transition to a fair and significant opportunity for workers and their communities.

Fourth, we're going to harness technology to benefit workers. That means ensuring the new technologies, like artificial intelligence and advanced platforms, work for working people.

And finally, we'll tackle workplace discrimination. Supporting our workers is about making sure no one—no one—is left behind.

So, through this new partnership, we're going to, with our labor movements, promote greater work equality, including through collective bargaining.

And so let me close with this. This announcement is also an invitation to every global leader and every labor organization to join us—to join us—and commit to a better future, one where workers all across the nations are going to be treated with dignity and respect. Our economies and our nations will all be stronger because of it.

Now I'd like to turn over to a leader who has made this partnership possible.

President Lula, the floor is yours.

*President Lula.* Well, first of all, I would like to greet President Biden and to say to President Biden—can you hear me, President Biden?

This is a historical moment for Brazil and for the U.S.

President Biden, can you hear me?

*[President Biden nodded.]*

I—you can? Yes, good.

And so, with the—there is the U.S. delegation that is here with me. I'd like to greet my wife that is also here. I'd like to greet the Brazilian trade unionists that came to my invitation by my Labor Minister. And I'd also like to greet the U.S. trade union leaders that are here that—which we always had a very good relationship—an extraordinary relationship with the U.S. labor movement.

Well, first of all, I have the happiness to share with President Biden this Partnership for Workers' Rights. And I'm very much honored with the presence of our brother, Gilbert Hounbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization, and my brother, Luiz Marinho, the Labor Minister of Brazil.

And I'd also like to greet the participation of the main leaders of the American Federation of Labor and other labor organizations in the U.S., in which I owe them a lot of—I'm very grateful to them, because in many difficult moments that we had in Brazil, the U.S. labor movement showed solidarity—provided solidarity to us, to the Brazilian labor movement.

When I joined the trade union activities a long time ago, I would never imagine that I would become the President of my country. And I would—never could imagine to be side by side the President Biden, side by side the Director-General of ILO, discussing the creation of decent work policy and partnership to improve the lives of the poor workers, especially in this digitalized world where artificial intelligence speaks much more powerfully than the workers' voice.

So this is a moment of great—that I'm very grateful. We know what happened with the neoliberal politics in the world. The fact of the matter is that we have, to date, more than 2 billion workers that are in the informal sector, according to ILO. And we have, more or less, 240 million human beings that, even being employed, they live in—under absolute poverty because they're

earning less than \$1.90 per day. It is unacceptable that women, ethnical minorities, and people LGBTQ+ are discriminated in the labor market.

Since I came back to the Presidency in Brazil, I have made all the endeavors to rebuild and unite the country. In very few months, we managed to do something extraordinary. We have already created in the first 8 months of my terms 1,200,000 formal works with job contracts.

The minimum wage, it came back to growth above past inflation—80 percent of the bargaining—collective bargaining negotiations have readjustments above past inflation—80 percent.

And we also passed in the Congress, after decades of waiting to pass such a bill, a law that guarantees to the women to receive the same salary that the man has if they perform the same work, the same position. It seemed impossible. So, equal work, equal pay.

We also established a collective bargaining table between the business sector, workers, and government. And this roundtable—this forum which we're going to develop not only a decent work—or decent job perspective due to the digital platforms that use precarious work, but we also want to create maybe a new framework in the function of labor and management.

A relationship of the 21st century that is civilized, but also following—to agree with what President Biden said: All people that believe that weak unions—weak unions—will make that the employer and the businessmen earns more in the country—well, they're mistaken. There is no democracy without strong trade unions, because the trade union effectively is the one that speaks on behalf of the worker to advocate for their rights.

I have already said to the U.S. American trade unionists my admiration for President Biden's vision that he has vis-à-vis the trade unions comes from the very first speech that he did in his Inauguration when he said, and I quote: "The wealth of the U.S. was not made by the business sector. It was built by the workers."

This is the most pure truth, and we will make the energy transition an extraordinary opportunity to reindustrialize and maybe to make the jobs become quality jobs.

We are working directly with some urgent things, President Biden. That is our commitment to the protection of workers' rights: promoting decent work through public and private investments; fighting discrimination in the workplace; approach centered on the workers in the transition for clean energies; and last, the use of technology in terms of digital technology in pro of decent work.

This initiative, President Biden, will be taken forward by the U.S. President, by me, in all the international forum that we will participate. Brazil will chair, next year, the G-20. And so we will chair—then afterwards, in 2025, the BRICS process. And then we'll have COP30 in the 2026 in the heart of the Amazon region.

In all these forums, I can reassure the workers and assure you all that we will be working and trying to build conditions so that all the rulers in the world will accept the protocol that—the ones that we're doing here. Because all human beings—man or woman, Black or White—they have the right to decent work.

Thank you very much.

*President Biden.* Good job.

*International Labour Organization Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo.* Mr. President, from ILO perspective, it's quite a historical moment to have two of the most influential leaders together launching this initiative, knowing how close the workers' rights, the workers' well-being is for both President Biden and President Lula.

ILO has been working for more than 100 years to advance the cause of social justice and decent work. And our unique tripartite governance structure gives workers, employers, and government equal status in our work.

We have unparalleled understanding of how decent work can build better lives, better economies, and better societies. This is why we unequivocally welcome this United States and Brazil partnership for workers' rights.

While listening to President Biden highlighting the key elements of the partnership, he just reminded me of our own mission: not only the rights—fighting for the rights against the exploitation, against child labor, against forced labor; fighting against discrimination in all forms of discrimination, as President Lula reminded us; the accountability and the role of the private sector; the impacts of technology, including artificial intelligence—it's not anymore just the blue collar, but both the blue collars and the white collars; and the just transition—just transition—about jobs, about not leaving anybody behind.

Those are very critical to ILO mandate, so decent work empowers workers to organize and to negotiate. It is—fosters social justice with essential—if people are to have the brighter future, which is the reason why all of us are here.

So, from ILO perspective, we are so committed to really be part of this initiative. And I can promise you that we will do our very best not to deceive you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:42 p.m. at the InterContinental New York Barclay hotel. In his remarks, President Lula referred to his wife Rosângela. President Lula spoke in Portuguese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Brazil-U.S. Partnership for Workers' Rights, remarks with President Lula in New York City; Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Brazil, President Lula.

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